

COLLABORATIVE CENTER FOR
LITERACY
DEVELOPMENT

**Kentucky Reading First Evaluation
January – September 30, 2004**

Executive Summary

Reading First Evaluation Team

Principal Investigator: Kaye Lowe, Ph.D.

Statistician: Onecia Gibson, Ph.D.

Observation Team

Ann Asbeck, Ed.D.

Ann Hendrix

Drema Howard

Linda Price

Pam Seale

Patricia Callaway

Lauren Jones

Graduate Research Assistants

Lauren Jones

Jamie Morrison

Dr. Kaye Lowe

338 Dickey Hall

University of Kentucky

Lexington, KY 40506-0017

(859) 257-7213

klowe2@uky.edu

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Collaborative Center for Literacy Development is responsible for conducting the state evaluation for Reading First (R.F.). The evaluation commenced in January 2004 and examines the effectiveness of Kentucky R.F. from three perspectives:

1. Kentucky R.F. program implementation
2. Reading achievement gains of students P1-P4
3. The impact of Kentucky R.F. on reducing the numbers of students reading below grade level.

Approximately 2962 teachers and 1095 Special Education teachers are involved in this initiative. The State has appointed ten State Coaches, eleven State Literacy Coaches and all R.F. schools have appointed a School R.F. Coach.

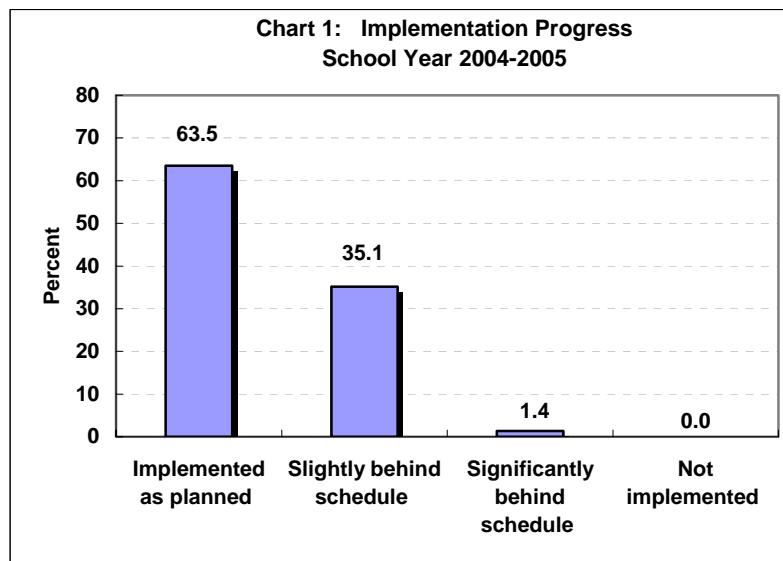
The evaluation documents the progress of approximately 18,527 students P1-P4 in seventy-four schools using the mandatory assessments, GRADE and DIBELS. In addition, in-depth case studies of twenty schools were conducted. Interviews, observations, and surveys were conducted on a regular basis throughout the implementation process with all R.F. schools.

Observations were conducted at R.F. professional development workshops, including the Summer Institute and Principals' Institute. Interviews were conducted with state, district, school coaches, KDE administrators and Principals; focus group meetings were completed with school staff from twenty case study sites, and eighty classrooms across Kentucky were observed. A number of specifically designed tools were developed for the evaluation and are attached to the full report.

Findings

Overall, there was a strong commitment to improving reading outcomes for all Kentucky students P1-P4. KDE administrators, district, state and school coaches worked industriously to have R.F. in place to begin the 2004-2005 school year. A strong sense of collaboration existed across the state. The momentum to change literacy practices continued to expand into non-funded schools and grades beyond P4. The commitment to have R.F. be successful in Kentucky was also influenced by a "fear factor." Teachers expressed concern, on many occasions, that they might do "something wrong" and be responsible for their schools losing funding.

Chart 1 indicates that the majority of schools reported in September that their implementation had gone according to plan. Of the 74 schools, 63.5% (47 schools) report that the RF program has been implemented as planned; 35.1% (26 schools) report that the RF program is slightly behind schedule; and 1.4% (1 school) report that the RF program is significantly behind schedule.



Leadership

The enormity of this project, and the toll it has taken on the KDE administrators, cannot be underestimated. Administrators were required to collaborate, multi-task and work horrendous hours in order to meet unrealistic deadlines. The success of having 74 schools identified, funding allocated, resources in place, Summer Institutes completed and students assessed within the testing window, has not yet been celebrated. The Coordinator of R.F. was acknowledged in interviews for her role in taking on such a mammoth undertaking. Her commitment to ensure the Kentucky plan was implemented successfully was well recognized.

Communication was often highlighted as a key area needing attention. Most agree that improved communication between KDE, districts and schools is required. Often, conflicting information was being received by schools, and depended upon who was giving the advice at the time. KDE administrators also had the additional concern that they had to be responsive to changes demanded by Washington as the project evolved.

School personnel believe that implementation of the R.F. program has improved school communications and collaboration as a result of regular meetings, intense professional development and consistency in core program implementation across all grades. In interviews and focus group meetings, teachers often commented that “we are doing this together”. Seventy-five percent of the case study schools report that they are collaborating across grade levels. All school personnel had a sense of being responsible for all students across grade levels and often stated that they were working together as a staff for the common goal of having students reading at or above grade level.

We recommend that:

- KDE designate a R.F. Office with specific contact staff available for answering and resolving questions/concerns.
- KDE provide regular and consistent guidance in administering R.F. by conducting regular updates via the internet; video conferences; meetings with specific groups, for example, District Coaches, Principals, and schools using the same core programs.
- Agendas for meetings reflect the needs of school personnel. Exemplary practices at the school and classroom levels in Kentucky should be shared.

Role of R.F. State and Literacy Coaches

The committed effort of the R.F. Coaches is recognized at all levels of implementation. They are regarded as “key players” and liaise between KDE and schools. Words such as “professional, hard working, enthusiastic, visible, and supportive” were a few that used to describe their

conscientious efforts to improve literacy outcomes in Kentucky. They described themselves as being on a huge learning curve in the areas of technology, diverse reading programs, assessments, professional development and leadership. Ninety-five percent of participants at the Summer Institute acknowledged their high levels of expertise and professionalism.

We recommend that:

- A network of support amongst coaches continues to be created and easy access to KDE administrators be provided.
- KDE establishes systems to help maintain a high level of enthusiasm and avoid burn out.

Role of School Coaches

School Coaches are vital in the implementation process. They are enthusiastic, extremely dedicated, and responsible for the day-to-day operation of the R.F. Program. Many expressed that their role has been overwhelming due to many unanticipated tasks. All coaches worked during the summer to have the R.F. materials ready for the beginning of the school year. They are the point of contact for their schools. In all cases, the principal relied heavily on the school coach.

It is apparent that school coaches need assistance dealing with their conflicting roles and changing status within the school structure. The majority of school coaches were aware that they had a job description. Some had not seen it and most suspected that their peers did not know what it contained. School coaches have been promoted from being classroom teachers and “members of the staff” to positions of authority and leadership responsibility. Most of the coaches do not have leadership experience. They require guidance in giving feedback to their peers. In the initial stages of the project, there were noticeable inconsistencies in how school coaches allocated their time. For example, one school coach spent 7% of her time on planning and administration compared with others spending more than 60%.

We recommend that:

- KDE clarify the role of the school coach and offer training in providing guidance and feedback to peers.
- A network of support be created across districts and the state.
- School coaches attend the National R.F. Conference to widen the level of support and hear what other states are doing regarding implementation.

Role of the District Coach

The district coach provides crucial support through frequent and ongoing direct contact with school coaches. The district coach coordinates R.F. activities among the district’s R.F. schools. Sixty percent of the twenty case study schools report a high level of coordination among R.F. schools by the district coach. Fifty percent of the case study schools report that the district coach also coordinates district-wide R.F. activities for district schools that are not R.F. funded. The District Coach plays a pivotal role in spreading the impact of R.F. to both R.F. and non-R.F. funded schools. The District Coach also serves as the primary intermediary for information coming from KDE intended for the schools.

It is important to note that the district coach’s responsibilities extend beyond R.F. Generally, R.F. tasks have been added to a full-time set of district responsibilities.

We recommend that:

- KDE address communication issues that arise for an intermediary trying to serve two levels of R.F. (KDE and school).
- KDE consider how to support and assist district coaches with several R.F. schools (as compared to support for a district coach with one R.F. school).

Role of Principal

The most significant role of the school principal is providing broad-based support to the reading coach and teaching staff. This support includes monitoring the “big picture” of R.F. and keeping to the implementation schedule. The principal ensures the school’s implementation process adheres to the non-negotiable issues of R.F. These issues include protecting the 90-minute literacy block, use of the core reading program, and administering the GRADE and DIBELS assessments.

We recommend that:

- Principals be provided with opportunities to network with other R.F. principals.
- Principals receive assistance with observing and monitoring classroom implementation of R.F. and core reading programs.
- Principals meet and share information with other Kentucky principals who are successful in leading a R.F. school.

Professional Development

Overall, professional development has been well received in the seventy-four schools. Many teachers have expressed being overwhelmed by the amount of time and information involved, however, they are glad to have the opportunity to increase their knowledge and confidence regarding scientifically-based reading research (SBRR).

In the initial phase of implementation, professional development centered on the Summer Institutes, core reading program training, and assessment training. Approximately, 1364 teachers and principals attended the fifty-three Summer Institutes and State Coaches have completed 3,590 hours assisting schools. Most (93%) of participants claimed that the Summer Institute stimulated them to try new ideas, and that they had gained sufficient knowledge of the five components and were confident to teach them.

Attendance was high at all professional development activities. For example, from the case study schools 85% of teachers and administrators attended the Summer Institute, 90% participated in core reading program training, and 80% attended assessment training. Teachers and coaches who attended the R.F. National Conference in Minneapolis stated that this was particularly beneficial.

In many schools, ongoing professional development will be embedded and include mentoring and reciprocal coaching among teachers. Choices for professional development programs will be determined as the need arises. At this time, several schools indicated needing professional development focusing on establishing literacy centers and using the core program effectively to meet all students’ needs.

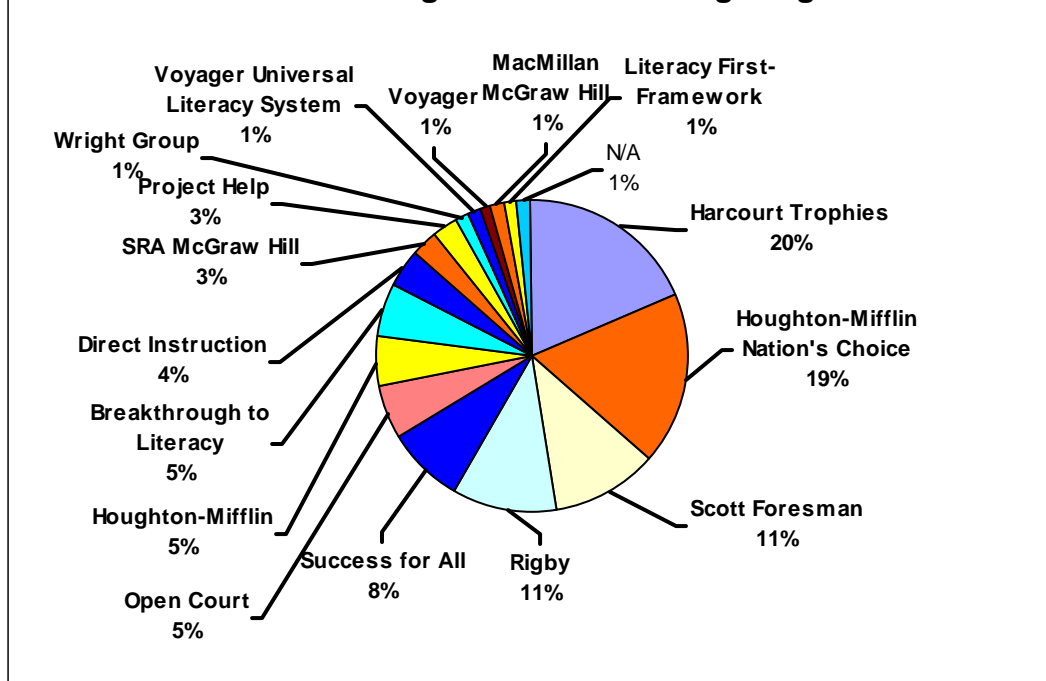
We recommend that:

- Future professional development include instruction on designing and using literacy centers, aligning the core program with the 5 components, structuring the 90 minute block, conducting classroom observations, and appropriate ways to give feedback on teaching the 5 components.
- School coaches attend R.F. National Conference.

Instruction - Core Program Implementation

Case study data indicate that all twenty case study schools have received core program materials. All P1-P4 teachers use the core program as the main material for reading instruction during the ninety minute block.

Chart 2: Reading First Core Reading Programs



Core Reading Programs used in Kentucky

There is considerable variety in how the core programs organize instruction, some with strong emphasis on whole group/teacher-directed instruction, some with strong emphasis on learner-centered instruction/student choice, and others with a balance of these two extremes - often making use of literacy centers. Regardless of approach, there is evidence of strict adherence to the core program (most often as planned out in the teachers' manuals). This strict adherence is often driven by a prevailing fear ("fear factor") of the possibility of losing R.F. funding if the core program is not followed exactly as described ("done the right way").

As part of their R.F. proposals, schools chose core programs that address the five R.F. components. Initially, schools recognized that some programs were weak in one or more of the R.F. components, and thus needed to be supplemented in those areas. However, with actual implementation of the core program, staff at many schools developed an assumption that their core program sufficiently covered the five R.F. components "if done the right way." Observations of instruction at case study sites strongly suggest that this is frequently not the case.

Observations of program manuals revealed that strict adherence to the instructional plans provided with the core program often did not result in, nor intend, a focus on one or more of the five R.F. components during every ninety minute literacy block. Observations confirm that students generally were engaged in instructional activities, but at times these "manual-driven" activities focused on cutting, pasting, and coloring or other learning goals not explicitly connected to the five R.F. components.

We recommend that:

- Instructional planning be more closely aligned with the five R.F. components
- An instructional planning tool (lesson plan template) be used to identify the R.F. components covered during instruction

Fidelity to the Core Program vs. the Five R.F. Components

Throughout this document, emphasis has been placed on the overall commitment of teachers and school coaches to achieve success in improving student reading by “doing it [R.F.] right.” In attempting to meet this goal, concerns have been expressed about KDE’s insistence on “fidelity to the program” even when it becomes apparent that the five components of R.F. are not being emphasized to a similar degree in planning instruction and teaching. The five components are getting lost when teachers come to believe that this “fidelity” is to take priority over all else. “Good teaching” practices, encouraged and nurtured in R.F. professional development, are often set aside in deference to “the teacher’s manual.” The level of student engagement in many of the 80 observations was minimal.

We recommend that:

- KDE provide ongoing clarification of the relationship of these two goals at the state (and national) level with consistent information passed to schools in a timely manner.
- KDE and DOE affirm that the five R.F. components are to be given priority for student learning during the ninety minute literacy block.
- Teachers be supported in their professional judgment when it comes to meeting the expectations of R.F.
- Teachers identify effective instruction that engages students in literacy learning.

The 90-Minute Block

Observations and interviews in schools indicate that in most instances 90-minutes of protected time is being utilized for literacy instruction (65% of 20 case study schools). Interruptions are occurring in some classrooms and range from messages on the intercom, to using the room as the coffee room. At this stage in implementation, many 90-minute blocks are characterized by “manual driven instruction”.

We recommend that:

- The evaluation team more closely monitors the interruptions to the ninety minute block in the twenty case study schools.
- KDE clarifies the following:
 - What instruction can be included within the 90-minutes?
 - Can supplemental materials be used during the 90-minutes?
 - Can interventions with struggling readers take place during this time?
 - Are literacy centers supposed to operate during the 90-minutes?
 - If schools have extended the literacy block time, how should the use of this time defined?

Assessment

After a slow and sometimes laborious beginning, all schools administered GRADE and DIBELS within the testing window. Despite initial concerns with administering the tests and communications with AGS and DIBELS, teachers generally adapted well to the situation and appreciated the immediate feedback. Initially, teachers expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and alarmed. They have since “calmed down” and see how the tests can be used to inform classroom instruction.

Some concerns with the assessment included:

- The late arrival of the GRADE materials effected the timeline and morale.
- Palm training began too late in the testing process.
- Demographic information needed to be re entered, in some cases three times.

We recommend that:

- Schools be informed about efficient processes that some schools developed for administering the tests.

- The data management system be extended to serve the needs of the state, schools, and individual teachers so that comparisons can be made across programs, schools, grades, and classes.
- A state monitoring system be established to confirm validity in administering the tests.

Intervention

Most schools are in the beginning stages of establishing their R.F. intervention program. Materials have been ordered and most have arrived at the school. Teachers are waiting for GRADE and DIBELS results to determine how students will be grouped for instruction. In the meantime, they are using observations and past assessments to make these decisions. Multiple measures will be used to determine the need for intervention, such as—GRADE, DIBELS, and core program materials/assessments. In this way, intervention is assessment driven.

We recommend that:

- KDE clarify the following:
Can students be withdrawn for intervention during the 90 minutes? When? Who decides how the intervention occurs?
Who does the intervention?
- Further investigations of the intervention systems in R.F. schools be undertaken.
- Schools share systems and ideas for effective intervention.

Environment

In classrooms observed and interviews conducted, it was evident that core reading programs are in place. From the observations, many classrooms (58%) were saturated in commercially produced materials and there was very little student work on display. This could be because it was early in the school year. Word walls, while present, did not appear to be used on a regular basis and most displayed commercially produced words. Of the eighty observations, word walls were being used in 31% of classrooms.

We recommend that:

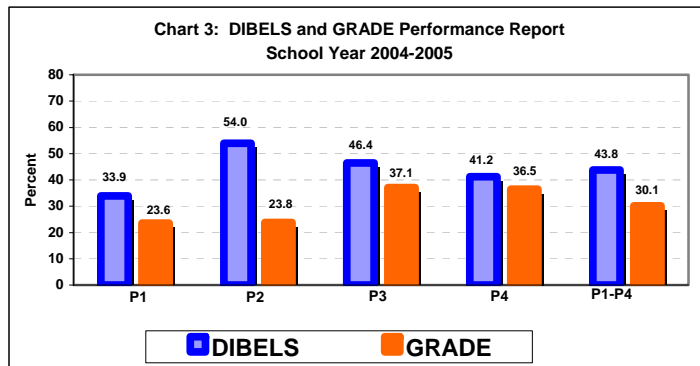
- Teachers receive professional development on how to use environmental print.
- Classrooms celebrate and acknowledge students' work.
- A variety of reading materials beyond the core program be made available to students.

Executive summary conclusion

R.F. in Kentucky is in its initial stages of implementation. Despite the delay in receiving the first round of funding, obstacles have been overcome and the schedule maintained. This is a tribute to the unwavering commitment and dogged determination of all stakeholders to have everything in place to begin the academic year. There is gathering momentum in the area of literacy in Kentucky as administrators and teachers collaborate to improve outcomes for all students P1-P4.

Baseline Data for 2004-2005

Charts 3-8 indicate the percentage of Kentucky students scoring at, or above, grade level on the DIBELS and GRADE assessments. The graphs also report DIBELS and GRADE data according to disaggregated categories.



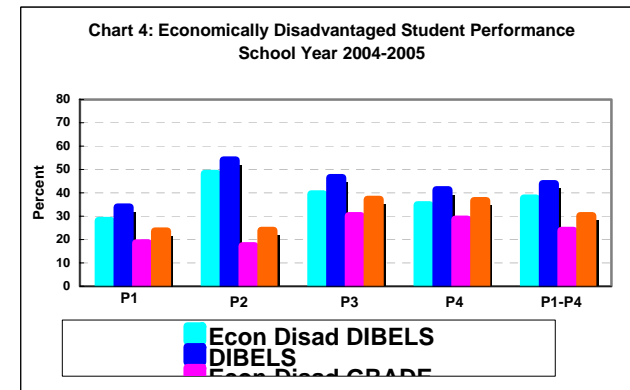
On the DIBELS assessment, 43.8% of P1-P4 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 30.1% of P1-P4 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 33.9% of P1 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 23.6% of P1 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 54.0% of P2 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 23.8% of P2 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 46.4% of P3 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 37.1% of P3 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 41.2% of P4 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 36.5% of P4 students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.



On the DIBELS assessment, 37.7% of P1-P4 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 23.9% of P1-P4 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

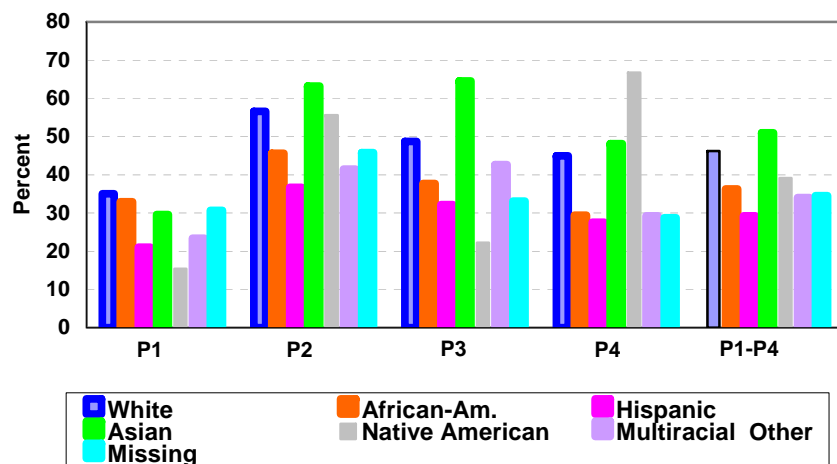
On the DIBELS assessment, 28.1% of P1 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 18.5% of P1 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 48.2% of P2 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 17.3% of P2 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 39.4% of P3 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 30.1% of P3 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 34.8% of P4 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 28.7% of P4 economically disadvantaged students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

**Chart 5: Student DIBELS Performance by Race
School Year 2004-2005**



On the DIBELS assessment, 46.2% of P1-P4 white students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 36.3% of P1-P4 African-American students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 29.2% of P1-P4 Hispanic students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

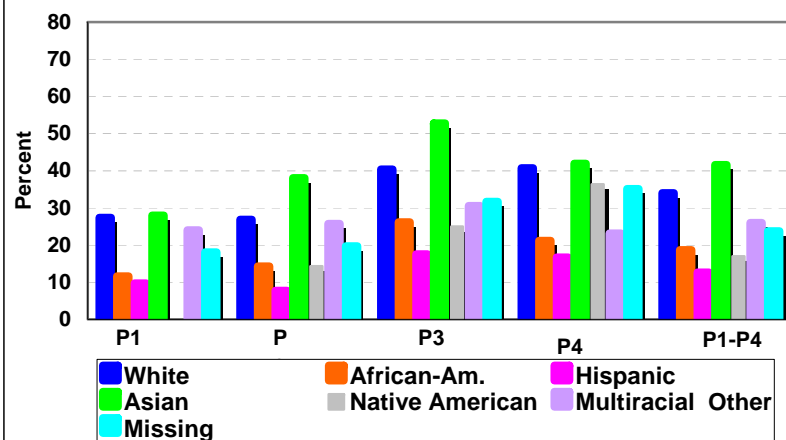
On the DIBELS assessment, 51.0% of P1-P4 Asian students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 39.1% of P1-P4 Native American students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 34.0% of P1-P4 multiracial/other race students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 34.5% of P1-P4 students with a missing race value in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

**Chart 6: Students GRADE Performance by Race
School Year 2004-2005**



On the GRADE assessment, 34.0% of P1-P4 white students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the GRADE assessment, 18.7% of P1-P4 African-American students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

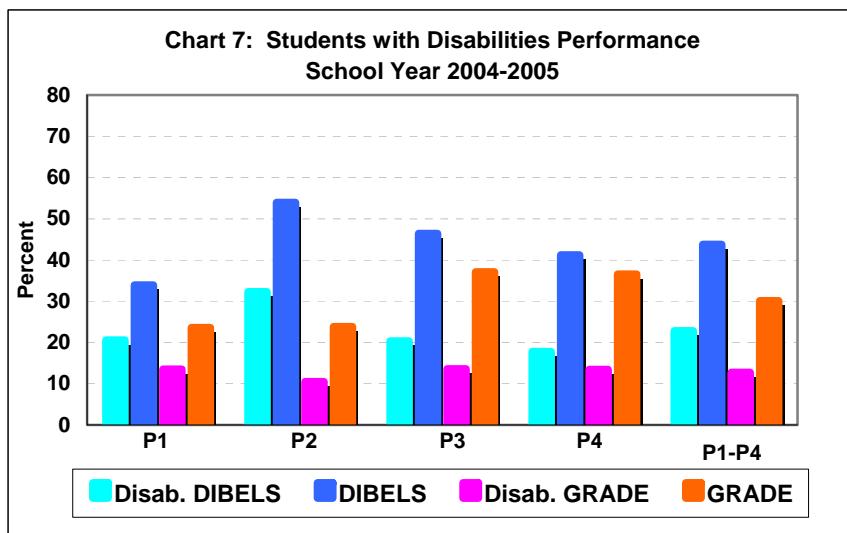
On the GRADE assessment, 12.7% of P1-P4 Hispanic students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the GRADE assessment, 41.6% of P1-P4 Asian students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the GRADE assessment, 17.0% of P1-P4 Native American students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the GRADE assessment, 26.0% of P1-P4 multiracial/other race students in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the GRADE assessment, 23.8% of P1-P4 students with a missing race value in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.



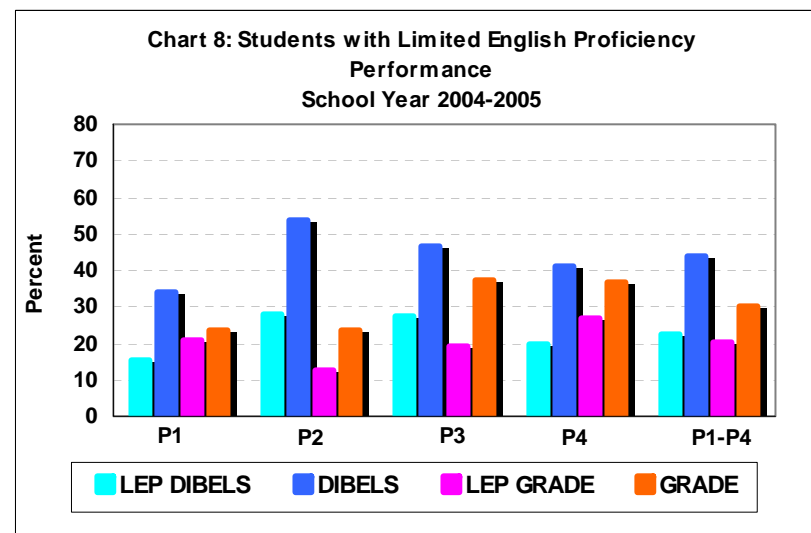
On the DIBELS assessment, 22.8% of P1-P4 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 12.7% of P1-P4 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 20.6% of P1 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 13.5% of P1 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 32.3% of P2 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 10.5% of P2 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 20.3% of P3 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 13.6% of P3 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 17.8% of P4 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 13.5% of P4 students with disabilities in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.



On the DIBELS assessment, 22.6% of P1-P4 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 20.1% of P1-P4 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 15.4% of P1 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 20.7% of P1 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 27.8% of P2 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 12.7% of P2 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 27.6% of P3 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 19.4% of P3 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.

On the DIBELS assessment, 19.5% of P4 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient. On the GRADE assessment, 27.1% of P4 students with limited English proficiency in RF schools scored at grade level or proficient.